

## 8. UNUSUAL FEEDING BEHAVIOUR OF SQUIRREL, *FUNAMBULUS* SPP.

The BOOK OF INDIAN ANIMALS by S.H. Prater states that the usual food of Squirrels are fruits, nuts, young shoots, buds and barks. Insects are eaten at a pinch, as also the eggs of birds.

Some years ago when I was in school at Jaisalmer, Rajasthan (1976-77), a squirrel, perhaps the five-striped, was noticed feeding on a bird (House Sparrow). The bird was apparently sick and was standing quietly at the side of a wall on the roof in the summer around 3-4 p.m. The bird was perhaps, unable to fly. I was watching the bird at a distance of about 8 to 10 m. Suddenly a squirrel came down, looked around and reached the bird. It caught the

bird which struggled a little, flapping its wings, but it could not fly and free itself from the squirrel and fell on the same spot. I kept on watching the behaviour of both. Within a few minutes the squirrel ate half of the hind part of the bird and went away, leaving the rest behind.

This unusual behaviour of the squirrel (*Funambulus* spp.) indicates that they are not only herbivorous but are also occasionally carnivorous.

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## 9. TOXICITY OF WAX BLOCKS AGAINST RODENTS IN LABORATORY AND FIELD CONDITIONS

### INTRODUCTION

Wax block baits have lately drawn worldwide attention in field rodents control by its easy application, high acceptability, bait durability and easily accountable left over. High acceptability of cholecalciferol wax blocks against *Tatera indica* and *Rattus rattus* was reported by Mathur and Jain 1987, brodifacoum wax blocks against some Indian rodent species by Soni and Tripathi 1989, Bromadiolone and Warfarin cakes against house rat by Jhala *et al.* 1984. On the basis of these observations, attempts were made in the present investigation to evaluate comparative efficacy of rodenticide embedded in a mixture of cereals and paraffin wax cakes in the laboratory and field conditions.

### MATERIAL AND METHODS

Laboratory no-choice feeding test was carried out to evaluate the toxicity of poisoned baits of fumarin 0.025%, warfarin 0.025%, Bromadiolone 0.005%, cholecalciferol 0.005% and flocoumafen 0.005% embedded in a mixture of cereals and paraffin wax against *M. hurrianae*. All the animals were

sexed, weighed and acclimatized to laboratory conditions prior to the experiments. Rat feed (Hindustan Lever Ltd., Bombay) and water were provided *ad libitum*. The animals were weighed and starved for 24 h. Poison cake of 10 g each was exposed to individually caged animals. For each poison bait twenty animals of both the sexes were used. Cakes were exposed for 24 hr. Leftover and spilled food was also weighed and recorded. After 24 hr. of poison baiting fresh rat feed was provided daily until death.

In another set of experiment, the field was selected and the investigation was carried out in village Nyla, 24 km from Jaipur. The village has a compact block of wheat and barley crops. About 8 ha. of area was selected for each poison bait. The pretreatment level of infestation was estimated by adopting the burrow count method (Barnett and Prakash 1975). The burrows in the study area were sealed with wet soil and lime. The reopened burrows next day were taken as live burrows. The burrows of each field area were treated with wax cakes of 0.025% of fumarin, 0.025% of warfarin, 0.005% of Bromadiolone, 0.005% of brodifacoum, 0.005% of cholecalciferol and 0.005% of flocoumafen of 10 g